

GENERAL PERSHING'S OWN STORY

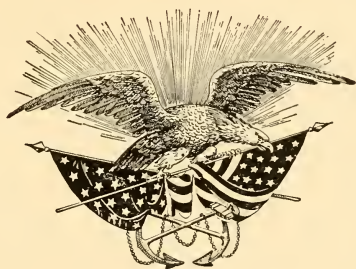
of the
VICTORIOUS



**AMERICAN
ARMY**



GENERAL PERSHING'S
OWN STORY
OF THE VICTORIOUS
AMERICAN ARMY



FROM THE REPORT OF THE
SECRETARY OF WAR
1918



COPYRIGHT BY HARRIS & EWING

GENERAL JOHN J. PERSHING

JAN 20 1913

© CL A 510568
7101

1570
P4

General Pershing's Own Story of the Victorious American Army

November 20, 1918.

To the Secretary of War:

My Dear Mr. Secretary:

In response to your request, I have the honor to submit this brief summary of the organization and operations of the American Expeditionary Force from May 26, 1917, until the signing of the armistice, November 11, 1918. Pursuant to your instructions, immediately upon receiving my orders I selected a small staff and proceeded to Europe in order to become familiar with conditions at the earliest possible moment.

The warmth of our reception in England and France was only equaled by the readiness of the commanders in chief of the veteran armies of the Allies and their staffs to place their experience at our disposal. In consultation with them the most effective means of co-operation of effort was considered. With French and British armies at their maximum strength, and all efforts to dispossess the enemy from his firmly entrenched positions in Belgium and France failed, it was necessary to plan for an American force adequate to turn the scale in favor of the Allies. Taking account of the strength of the Central Powers at that time, the immensity of the problem which confronted us could hardly be overestimated. The first requisite being an organization that could give intelligent direction to effort, the formation of a General Staff occupied my early attention.

A well organized General Staff through which the commander exercises his functions is essential to a successful modern army. However capable our division, our battalion, and our companies as such, success would be impossible without thoroughly co-ordinated endeavor. A General Staff broadly organized and trained for war had not hitherto existed in our Army. Under the Commander in Chief, this staff must carry out the policy and direct the details of administration, supply, preparation, and operations of the Army as a whole, with all special branches and bureaus subject to its control. As models to aid us we had the veteran French General Staff and the experience of the British who had similarly formed an organization to meet the demands of a great army. By selecting from each the features best adapted to our basic organization, and fortified by our own early experience in the war, the development of our great General Staff system was completed.

The General Staff is naturally divided into five groups, each with its chief who is an assistant to the Chief of the General Staff. G. 1 is in charge of organization and equipment of troops, replacements, tonnage, priority of overseas shipment, the auxiliary welfare association and cognate subjects; G. 2 has censorship, enemy intelligence, gathering and disseminating information, preparation of maps, and all similar subjects; G. 3 is charged with all strategic studies and plans, move-

General
Staff

General Staff

ment of troops, and the supervision of combat operations; G. 4 co-ordinates important questions of supply, construction, transport arrangements for combat, and of the operations of the service of supply, and of hospitalization and the evacuation of the sick and wounded; G. 5 supervises the various schools and has general direction and co-ordination of education and training.

The first Chief of Staff was Col. (now Maj. Gen.) James G. Harbord, who was succeeded in May, 1918, by Maj. Gen. James W. McAndrew. To these officers, to the deputy Chief of Staff, and to the assistant Chiefs of Staff, who, as heads of sections, aided them, great credit is due for the results obtained not only in perfecting the General Staff organization but in applying correct principles to the multiplicity of problems that have arisen.

Organization and Training

After a thorough consideration of allied organizations it was decided that our combat division should consist of four regiments of infantry of 3,000 men, with three battalions to a regiment and four companies of 250 men each to a battalion, and of an artillery brigade of three regiments, a machine-gun battalion, an engineer regiment, a trench-mortar battery, a signal battalion, wagon trains, and the headquarters staffs and military police. These, with medical and other units, made a total of over 28,000 men, or practically double the size of a French or German division. Each corps would normally consist of six divisions—four combat and one depot and one replacement division—and also two regiments of cavalry, and each army of from three to five corps. With four divisions fully trained, a corps could take over an American sector with two divisions in line and two in reserve, with the depot and replacement divisions prepared to fill the gaps in the ranks.

Our purpose was to prepare an integral American force which should be able to take the offensive in every respect. Accordingly, the development of a self-reliant infantry by thorough drill in the use of the rifle and in the tactics of open warfare was always uppermost. The plan of training after arrival in France allowed a division one month for acclimatization and instruction in small units from battalions down, a second month in quiet trench sectors by battalion, and a third month after it came out of the trenches when it should be trained as a complete division in war of movement.

Very early a system of schools was outlined and started, which should have the advantage of instruction by officers direct from the front. At the great school center at Langres, one of the first to be organized, was the staff school, where the principles of general staff work, as laid down in our own organization, were taught to carefully selected officers. Men in the ranks, who had shown qualities of leadership, were sent to the school of candidates for commissions. A school of the line taught younger officers the principles of leadership, tactics, and the use of the different weapons. In the artillery school, at Saumur, young officers were taught the fundamental principles of modern artillery; while at Issoudun an immense plant was built for training cadets in aviation. These and other schools, with their well-considered curriculums for training in every branch of our organization, were co-ordinated in a manner best to develop an efficient army out of willing and industrious young men, many of whom had not before known even the rudiments of military technique. Both Marshal Haig and General Petain placed officers and men at our disposal for instructional purposes, and we are deeply indebted for the opportunities given to profit by their veteran experience.

The eventual place the American Army should take on the western front was to a large extent influenced by the vital question of communication and supply. The northern ports of France were crowded by the British Armies' shipping and supplies while the southern ports, though otherwise at our service, had not adequate port facilities for our purposes and these we should have to build. The already overtaxed railway system behind the active front in northern France would not be available for us as lines of supply and those leading from the southern ports of northeastern France would be unequal to our needs without much new construction. Practically all warehouses, supply depots and regulating stations must be provided by fresh constructions. While France offered us such material as she had to spare after a drain of three years, enormous quantities of material had to be brought across the Atlantic.

American
Zone

With such a problem any temporization or lack of definiteness in making plans might cause failure even with victory within our grasp. Moreover, broad plans commensurate with our national purpose and resources would bring conviction of our power to every soldier in the front line, to the nations associated with us in the war, and to the enemy. The tonnage for material for necessary construction for the supply of an army of three and perhaps four million men would require a mammoth program of shipbuilding at home, and miles of dock construction in France, with a corresponding large project for additional railways and for storage depots.

All these considerations led to the inevitable conclusion that if we were to handle and supply the great forces deemed essential to win the war we must utilize the southern ports of France—Bordeaux, La Pallice, St. Nazaire, and Brest—and the comparatively unused railway systems leading therefrom to the northeast. Generally speaking, then, this would contemplate the use of our forces against the enemy somewhere in that direction, but the great depots of supply must be centrally located, preferably in the area included by Tours, Bourges, and Chateauroux, so that our armies could be supplied with equal facility wherever they might be serving on the western front.

To build up such a system there were talented men in the Regular Army, but more experts were necessary than the Army could furnish. Thanks to the patriotic spirit of our people at home, there came from civil life men trained for every sort of work involved in building and managing the organization necessary to handle and transport such an army and keep it supplied. With such assistance the construction and general development of our plans have kept pace with the growth of the forces, and the Service of Supply is now able to discharge from ships and move 45,000 tons daily, besides transporting troops and material in the conduct of active operations.

Growth of
the Service
of Supply

As to organization, all the administrative and supply services, except the Adjutant General's, Inspector General's, and Judge Advocate General's Departments which remain at general headquarters, have been transferred to the headquarters of the services of supplies at Tours under a commanding general responsible to the commander in chief for supply of the armies. The Chief Quartermaster, Chief Surgeon, Chief Signal Officer, Chief of Ordnance, Chief of Air Service, Chief of Chemical Warfare, the general purchasing agent in all that pertains to questions of procurement and supply, the Provost Marshal General in the maintenance of order in general, the Director General of Transportation in all that affects such matters, and the Chief Engineer in all matters of administration and supply, are sub-

Growth of the Service of Supply

ordinate to the Commanding General of the Service of Supply, who, assisted by a staff especially organized for the purpose, is charged with the administrative co-ordination of all these services.

The transportation department under the Service of Supply directs the operation, maintenance, and construction of railways, the operation of terminals, the unloading of ships, and transportation of material to warehouses or to the front. Its functions make necessary the most intimate relationship between our organization and that of the French, with the practical result that our transportation department has been able to improve materially the operations of railways generally. Constantly laboring under a shortage of rolling stock, the transportation department has nevertheless been able by efficient management to meet every emergency.

The Engineer Corps is charged with all construction, including light railways and roads. It has planned and constructed the many projects required, the most important of which are the new wharves at Bordeaux and Nantes, and the immense storage depots at La Pallice, Montoir, and Gievres, besides innumerable hospitals and barracks in various ports of France. These projects have all been carried on by phases keeping pace with our needs. The Forestry Service under the Engineer Corps has cut the greater part of the timber and railway ties required.

To meet the shortage of supplies from America, due to lack of shipping, the representatives of the different supply departments were constantly in search of available material and supplies in Europe. In order to co-ordinate these purchases and to prevent competition between our departments, a general purchasing agency was created early in our experience to co-ordinate our purchases and, if possible, induce our Allies to apply the principle among the Allied armies. While there was no authority for the general use of appropriations, this was met by grouping the purchasing representatives of the different departments under one control, charged with the duty of consolidating requisitions and purchases. Our efforts to extend the principle have been signally successful, and all purchases for the Allied armies are now on an equitable and co-operative basis. Indeed, it may be said that the work of this bureau has been thoroughly efficient and businesslike.

Artillery, Airplanes, and Tanks

Our entry into the war found us with few of the auxiliaries necessary for its conduct in the modern sense. Among our most important deficiencies in material were artillery, aviation, and tanks. In order to meet our requirements as rapidly as possible, we accepted the offer of the French Government to provide us with the necessary artillery equipment of seventy-fives, one fifty-five millimeter howitzers, and one fifty-five G P F guns from their own factories for thirty divisions. The wisdom of this course is fully demonstrated by the fact that, although we soon began the manufacture of these classes of guns at home, there were no guns of the calibers mentioned manufactured in America on our front at the date the armistice was signed. The only guns of these types produced at home thus far received in France are 109 seventy-five millimeter guns.

In aviation we were in the same situation, and here again the French Government came to our aid until our own aviation program should be under way. We obtained from the French the necessary planes for training our personnel, and they have provided us with a total of 2,676 pursuit, observation, and bombing planes. The first airplanes received from home arrived in May, and altogether we have received 1,379. The first American squadron completely equipped by American production, including airplanes, crossed the German lines

on August 7, 1918. As to tanks, we were also compelled to rely upon the French. Here, however, we were less fortunate, for the reason that the French production could barely meet the requirements of their own armies.

It should be fully realized that the French Government has always taken a most liberal attitude and has been most anxious to give us every possible assistance in meeting our deficiencies in these as well as in other respects. Our dependence upon France for artillery, aviation, and tanks was, of course, due to the fact that our industries had not been exclusively devoted to military production. All credit is due our own manufacturers for their efforts to meet our requirements, as at the time the armistice was signed we were able to look forward to the early supply of practically all our necessities from our own factories.

The welfare of the troops touches my responsibility as Commander in Chief to the mothers and fathers and kindred of the men who came to France in the impressionable period of youth. They could not have the privilege accorded European soldiers during their periods of leave of visiting their families and renewing their home ties. Fully realizing that the standard of conduct that should be established for them must have a permanent influence in their lives and on the character of their future citizenship, the Red Cross, the Young Men's Christian Association, Knights of Columbus, the Salvation Army, and the Jewish Welfare Board, as auxiliaries in this work, were encouraged in every possible way. The fact that our soldiers, in a land of different customs and language, have borne themselves in a manner in keeping with the cause for which they fought, is due not only to the efforts in their behalf but much more to other high ideals, their discipline, and their innate sense of self-respect. It should be recorded, however, that the members of these welfare societies have been untiring in their desire to be of real service to our officers and men. The patriotic devotion of these representative men and women has given a new significance to the Golden Rule, and we owe to them a debt of gratitude that can never be repaid.

During our periods of training in the trenches some of our divisions had engaged the enemy in local combats, the most important of which was Seicheprey by the Twenty-sixth on April 20, in the Toul sector, but none had participated in action as a unit. The First Division, which had passed through the preliminary stages of training, had gone to the trenches for its first period of instruction at the end of October and by March 21, when the German offensive in Picardy began, we had four divisions with experience in the trenches, all of which were equal to any demands of battle action. The crisis which this offensive developed was such that our occupation of an American sector must be postponed.

On March 28 I placed at the disposal of Marshal Foch, who had been agreed upon as Commander in Chief of the Allied Armies, all of our forces to be used as he might decide. At his request the First Division was transferred from the Toul sector to a position in reserve at Chaumont en Vexin. As German superiority in numbers required prompt action, an agreement was reached at the Abbeville conference of the Allied premiers and commanders and myself on May 2 by which British shipping was to transport ten American divisions to the British Army area, where they were to be trained and equipped, and additional British shipping was to be provided for as many divisions as possible for use elsewhere.

Artillery,
Airplanes,
and Tanks

Combat
Operations

Combat Operations

On April 26 the First Division had gone into the line in the Montdidier salient on the Picardy battlefield. Tactics had been suddenly revolutionized to those of open warfare, and our men, confident of the results of their training, were eager for the test. On the morning of May 28 this division attacked the commanding German position in its front, taking with splendid dash the town of Cantigny and all other objectives, which were organized and held steadfastly against vicious counter-attacks and galling artillery fire. Although local, this brilliant action had an electrical effect, as it demonstrated our fighting qualities under extreme battle conditions, and also that the enemy's troops were not altogether invincible.

The Germans' Aisne offensive, which began on May 27, had advanced rapidly toward the River Marne and Paris, and the Allies faced a crisis equally as grave as that of the Picardy offensive in March. Again every available man was placed at Marshal Foch's disposal, and the Third Division, which had just come from its preliminary training in the trenches, was hurried to the Marne. Its motorized machine-gun battalion preceded the other units and successfully held the bridgehead at the Marne, opposite Chateau-Thierry. The Second Division, in reserve near Montdidier, was sent by motor trucks and other available transport to check the progress of the enemy toward Paris. The Division attacked and retook the town and railroad station at Bouresches and sturdily held its ground against the enemy's best guard divisions. In the Battle of Belleau Wood, which followed, our men proved their superiority and gained a strong tactical position, with far greater loss to the enemy than to ourselves. On July 1, before the Second was relieved, it captured the village of Vaux with most splendid precision.

Meanwhile our Second Corps, under Maj. Gen. George W. Read, had been organized for the command of our divisions with the British, which were held back in training areas or assigned to second-line defenses. Five of the ten divisions were withdrawn from the British area in June, three to relieve divisions in Lorraine and the Vosges and two to the Paris area to join the group of American divisions which stood between the city and any farther advance of the enemy in that direction.

The great June-July troop movement from the States was well under way, and, although these troops were to be given some preliminary training before being put into action, their very presence warranted the use of all the older divisions in the confidence that we did not lack reserves. Elements of the Forty-second Division were in the line east of Rheims against the German offensive of July 15, and held their ground unflinchingly. On the right flank of this offensive four companies of the Twenty-eighth Division were in position in face of the advancing waves of the German infantry. The Third Division was holding the bank of the Marne from the bend east of the mouth of the Surmelin to the west of Mezy, opposite Chateau-Thierry, where a large force of German infantry sought to force a passage under support of powerful artillery concentrations and under cover of smoke screens. A single regiment of the Third wrote one of the most brilliant pages in our military annals on this occasion. It prevented the crossing at certain points on its front while, on either flank, the Germans, who had gained a footing, pressed forward. Our men, firing in three directions, met the German attacks with counter-attacks at critical points and succeeded in throwing two German divisions into complete confusion, capturing 600 prisoners.

The great force of the German Chateau-Thierry offensive established the deep Marne salient, but the enemy was taking chances, and the

vulnerability of this pocket to attack might be turned to his disadvantage. Seizing this opportunity to support my conviction, every division with any sort of training was made available for use in a counter-offensive. The place of honor in the thrust toward Soissons on July 18 was given to our First and Second Divisions in company with chosen French divisions. Without the usual brief warning of a preliminary bombardment, the massed French and American artillery, firing by the map, laid down its rolling barrage at dawn while the infantry began its charge. The tactical handling of our troops under these trying conditions was excellent throughout the action. The enemy brought up large numbers of reserves and made a stubborn defense both with machine guns and artillery, but through five days' fighting the First Division continued to advance until it had gained the heights above Soissons and captured the village of Berzy-le-sec. The Second Division took Beau Repaire farm and Vierzy in a very rapid advance and reached a position in front of Tigny at the end of its second day. These two divisions captured 7,000 prisoners and over 100 pieces of artillery.

Combat Operations

The Twenty-sixth Division, which, with a French division, was under command of our First Corps, acted as a pivot of the movement toward Soissons. On the 18th it took the village of Torcy, while the Third Division was crossing the Marne in pursuit of the retreating enemy. The Twenty-sixth attacked again on the 21st, and the enemy withdrew past the Chateau-Thierry-Soissons road. The Third Division, continuing its progress, took the heights of Mont St. Pere and the villages of Charteves and Jaulgonne in the face of both machine-gun and artillery fire.

On the 24th, after the Germans had fallen back from Trugny and Epieds, our Forty-second Division, which had been brought over from the Champagne, relieved the Twenty-sixth and, fighting its way through the Forêt de Fere, overwhelmed the nest of machine guns in its path. By the 27th it had reached the Ourcq, whence the Third and Fourth Divisions were already advancing, while the French divisions with which we were co-operating were moving forward at other points.

The Third Division had made its advance into Roncheres Wood on the 29th and was relieved for rest by a brigade of the Thirty-second. The Forty-second and Thirty-second undertook the task of conquering the heights beyond Cierges, the Forty-second capturing Sergy and the Thirty-second capturing Hill 230, both American divisions joining in the pursuit of the enemy to the Vesle, and thus the operation of reducing the salient was finished. Meanwhile the Forty-second was relieved by the Fourth at Chery-Chartreuve, and the Thirty-second by the Twenty-eighth, while the Seventy-seventh Division took up a position on the Vesle. The operations of these divisions on the Vesle were under the Third Corps. Maj. Gen. Robert L. Bullard, commanding.

With the reduction of the Marne salient we could look forward to the concentration of our divisions in our own zone. In view of the forthcoming operation against the St. Mihiel salient, which had long been planned as our first offensive action on a large scale, the First Army was organized on August 10 under my personal command. While American units had held different divisional and corps sectors along the western front, there had not been up to this time, for obvious reasons, a distinct American sector; but, in view of the important parts the American forces were now to play, it was necessary to take over a permanent portion of the line. Accordingly, on August 30, the line beginning at Port sur Seille, east of the Moselle and extending to

Battle of St. Mihiel

Battle of St. Mihiel

the west through St. Mihiel, thence north to a point opposite Verdun, was placed under my command. The American sector was afterwards extended across the Meuse to the western edge of the Argonne Forest, and included the Second Colonial French, which held the point of the salient, and the Seventeenth French Corps, which occupied the heights above Verdun.

The preparation for a complicated operation against the formidable defenses in front of us included the assembling of divisions and of corps and army artillery, transport, aircraft, tanks, ambulances, the location of hospitals, and the molding together of all of the elements of a great modern army with its own railheads, supplied directly by our own Service of Supply. The concentration for this operation, which was to be a surprise, involved the movement, mostly at night, of approximately 600,000 troops, and required for its success the most careful attention to every detail.

The French were generous in giving us assistance in corps and army artillery, with its personnel, and we were confident from the start of our superiority over the enemy in guns of all calibers. Our heavy guns were able to reach Metz and to interfere seriously with German rail movements. The French Independent Air Force was placed under my command which, together with the British bombing squadrons and our air forces, gave us the largest assembly of aviation that had ever been engaged in one operation on the western front.

From Les Eparges around the nose of the salient at St. Mihiel to the Moselle River the line was roughly 40 miles long and situated on commanding ground greatly strengthened by artificial defenses. Our First Corps (Eighty-second, Nintieth, Fifth, and Second Divisions), under command of Maj. Gen. Hunter Liggett, restrung its right on Pont-a-Mousson, with its left joining our Third Corps (the Eighty-ninth, Forty-second, and First Divisions), under Maj. Gen. Joseph T. Dickman, in line to Xivray, were to swing in toward Vigneulles on the pivot of the Moselle River for the initial assault. From Xivray to Mouilly the Second Colonial French Corps was in line in the center and our Fifth Corps, under command of Maj. Gen. George H. Cameron, with our Twenty-sixth Division and a French division at the western base of the salient, were to attack three difficult hills—Les Eparges, Combres, and Amaramthe. Our First Corps had in reserve the Seventy-eighth Division, our Fourth Corps the Third Division, and our First Army the Thirty-fifth and Ninety-first Divisions, with the Eightieth and Thirty-third available. It should be understood that our corps organizations are very elastic, and that we have at no time had permanent assignments of divisions to corps.

After four hours artillery preparation, the seven American divisions in the front line advanced at 5 A. M. on September 12, assisted by a limited number of tanks manned partly by Americans and partly by the French. These divisions, accompanied by groups of wire cutters and others armed with bangalore torpedoes, went through the successive bands of barbed wire that protected the enemy's front line and support trenches, in irresistible waves on schedule time, breaking down all defense of an enemy demoralized by the great volume of our artillery fire and our sudden approach out of the fog.

Our First Corps advanced to Thiaucourt, while our Fourth Corps curved back to the southwest through Nonsard. The Second Colonial French Corps made the slight advance required of it on very difficult ground, and the Fifth Corps took its three ridges and repulsed a counter-attack. A rapid march brought reserve regiments of a division of the Fifth Corps into Vigneulles in the early morning, where it linked up

with patrols of our Fourth Corps, closing the salient and forming a new line west of Thiaucourt to Vigneulles and beyond Fresnes-en-Woevre. At the cost of only 7,000 casualties, mostly light, we had taken 16,000 prisoners and 443 guns, a great quantity of material, released the inhabitants of many villages from enemy domination, and established our lines in a position to threaten Metz. This signal success of the American First Army in its first offensive was of prime importance. The Allies found they had a formidable army to aid them, and the enemy learned finally that he had one to reckon with.

Battle of St. Mihiel

On the day after we had taken the St. Mihiel salient, much of our corps and army artillery which had operated at St. Mihiel and our divisions in reserve at other points, were already on the move toward the area back of the line between the Meuse River and the western edge of the forest of Argonne. With the exception of St. Mihiel, the old German front line from Switzerland to the east of Rheims was still intact. In the general attack all along the line, the operation assigned the American Army as the hinge of this Allied offensive was directed toward the important railroad communications of the German armies through Mezieres and Sedan. The enemy must hold fast to this part of his lines or the withdrawal of his forces with four years' accumulation of plants and material would be dangerously imperiled.

Meuse- Argonne Offensive, First Phase

The German Army had as yet shown no demoralization and, while the mass of its troops had suffered in morale, its first-class divisions and notably its machine-gun defense were exhibiting remarkable tactical efficiency as well as courage. The German General Staff was fully aware of the consequences of a success on the Meuse-Argonne line. Certain that he would do everything in his power to oppose us, the action was planned with as much secrecy as possible and was undertaken with the determination to use all our divisions in forcing a decision. We expected to draw the best German divisions to our front and to consume them while the enemy was held under grave apprehension lest our attack should break his line, which it was our firm purpose to do.

Our right flank was protected by the Meuse, while our left embraced the Argonne Forest, whose ravines, hills, and elaborate defense screened by dense thickets had been generally considered impregnable. Our order of battle from right to left was the Third Corps from the Meuse to Malancourt, with the Thirty-third, Eightieth, and Fourth Divisions in line, and the Third Division as corps reserve; the Fifth Corps from Malancourt to Vauquois, with Seventy-ninth, Eighty-seventh, and Ninety-first Divisions in line, and the Thirty-second in corps reserve; and the First Corps, from Vauquois to Vienne le Chateau, with Thirty-fifth, Twenty-eighth, and Seventy-seventh Divisions in line, and the Ninety-second in corps reserve. The Army reserve consisted of the First, Twenty-ninth, and Eighty-second Divisions.

On the night of September 25 our troops quietly took the place of the French who thinly held the line in this sector which had long been inactive. In the attack, which began on the 26th, we drove through the barbed wire entanglements and the sea of shell craters across No Man's Land, mastering all the first line defenses. Continuing on the 27th and 28th, against machine guns and artillery of an increasing number of enemy reserve divisions, we penetrated to a depth of from three to seven miles, and took the village of Montfaucon and its commanding hill and Exermont, Gercourt, Cuisy, Septsarges, Malancourt, Ivairy, Epinonville, Charpentry, Very, and other villages. East of the Meuse one of our divisions, which was with the Second Colonial

Meuse-
Argonne
Offensive,
First Phase

French Corps, captured Marcheville and Rievville, giving further protection to the flank of our main body. We had taken 10,000 prisoners, we had gained our point of forcing the battle into the open and were prepared for the enemy's reaction, which was bound to come as he had good roads and ample railroad facilities for bringing up his artillery and reserves.

In the chill rain of dark nights our engineers had to build new roads across spongy, shell-torn areas, repair broken roads beyond No Man's Land, and build bridges. Our gunners, with no thought of sleep, put their shoulders to wheels and dragropes to bring their guns through the mire in support of the infantry, now under the increasing fire of the enemy's artillery. Our attack had taken the enemy by surprise, but, quickly recovering himself, he began to fire counter-attacks in strong force, supported by heavy bombardments, with large quantities of gas. From September 28 until October 4 we maintained the offensive against patches of woods defended by snipers and continuous lines of machine guns, and pushed forward our guns and transport, seizing strategical points in preparation for further attacks.

Other Units
With Allies

Other divisions attached to the Allied armies were doing their part. It was the fortune of our Second Corps, composed of the Twenty-seventh and Thirtieth Divisions, which had remained with the British, to have a place of honor in co-operation with the Australian Corps on September 29 and October 1 in the assault on the Hindenburg Line where the St. Quentin Canal passes through a tunnel under a ridge. The Thirtieth Division speedily broke through the main line of defense for all its objectives, while the Twenty-seventh pushed on impetuously through the main line until some of its elements reached Gouy. In the midst of the maze of trenches and shell craters and under cross-fire from machine guns the other elements fought desperately against odds. In this and in later actions, from October 6 to October 19, our Second Corps captured over 6,000 prisoners and advanced over 13 miles. The spirit and aggressiveness of these divisions have been highly praised by the British Army commander under whom they served.

On October 2-9 our Second and Thirty-sixth Divisions were sent to assist the French in an important attack against the old German positions before Rheims. The Second conquered the complicated defense works on their front against a persistent defense worthy of the grimdest period of trench warfare and attacked the strongly held wooded hill of Blanc Mont, which they captured in a second assault, sweeping over it with consummate dash and skill. This division then repulsed strong counter-attacks before the village and cemetery of Ste. Etienne and took the town, forcing the Germans to fall back from before Rheims and yield positions they had held since September, 1914. On October 9 the Thirty-sixth Division relieved the Second and, in its first experience under fire, withstood very severe artillery bombardment and rapidly took up the pursuit of the enemy, now retiring behind the Aisne.

Meuse-
Argonne
Offensive,
Second Phase

The Allied progress elsewhere cheered the efforts of our men in this crucial contest as the German command threw in more and more first-class troops to stop our advance. We made steady headway in the almost impenetrable and strongly held Argonne Forest, for, despite this reinforcement, it was our Army that was doing the driving. Our aircraft was increasing in skill and numbers and forcing the issue, and our infantry and artillery were improving rapidly with each new experience. The replacements fresh from home were put into exhausted divisions with little time for training, but they had the advantage of

serving beside men who knew their business and who had almost become veterans overnight. The enemy had taken every advantage of the terrain, which especially favored the defense by a prodigal use of machine guns manned by highly trained veterans and by using his artillery at short ranges. In the face of such strong frontal positions we should have been unable to accomplish any progress according to previously accepted standards, but I had every confidence in our aggressive tactics and the courage of our troops.

On October 4 the attack was renewed all along our front. The Third Corps tilting to the left followed the Briulles-Cunel road; our Fifth Corps took Gesnes, while the First Corps advanced for over two miles along the irregular valley of the Aire River and in the wooded hills of the Argonne that bordered the river, used by the enemy with all his art and weapons of defense. This sort of fighting continued against an enemy striving to hold every foot of ground and whose very strong counter-attacks challenged us at every point. On the 7th the First Corps captured Chatel-Chehery and continued along the river to Cornay. On the east of Meuse sector one of the two divisions co-operating with the French captured Consenvoye and the Faumont Woods. On the 9th the Fifth Corps, in its progress up the Aire, took Fleville, and the Third Corps which had continuous fighting against odds was working its way through Briulles and Cunel. On the 10th we had cleared the Argonne Forest of the enemy.

It was now necessary to constitute a second army, and on October 9 the immediate command of the First Army was turned over to Lieut. Gen. Hunter Liggett. The command of the Second Army, whose divisions occupied a sector in the Woevre, was given to Lieut. Gen. Robert L. Bullard, who had been commander of the First Division and then of the Third Corps. Maj. Gen. Dickman was transferred to the command of the First Corps, while the Fifth Corps was placed under Maj. Gen. Charles P. Summerall, who had recently commanded the First Division. Maj. Gen. John L. Hines, who had gone rapidly up from regimental to division commander, was assigned to the Third Corps. These four officers had been in France from the early days of the expedition and had learned their lessons in the school of practical warfare.

Our constant pressure against the enemy brought day by day more prisoners, mostly survivors from machine-gun nests captured in fighting at close quarters. On October 18 there was very fierce fighting in the Caures Woods east of the Meuse and in the Ormont Woods. On the 14th the First Corps took St. Juvin, and the Fifth Corps, in hand-to-hand encounters, entered the formidable Kriemhilde Line, where the enemy had hoped to check us indefinitely. Later the Fifth Corps penetrated further the Kriemhilde Line, and the First Corps took Champagneulles and the important town of Grandpre. Our dogged offensive was wearing down the enemy, who continued desperately to throw his best troops against us, thus weakening his line in front of our Allies and making their advance less difficult.

Meanwhile we were not only able to continue the battle, but our Thirty-seventh and Ninety-first Divisions were hastily withdrawn from our front and dispatched to help the French Army in Belgium. Detraining in the neighborhood of Ypres, these divisions advanced by rapid stages to the fighting line and were assigned to adjacent French corps. On October 31, in continuation of the Flanders offensive, they attacked and methodically broke down all enemy resistance. On November 3 the Thirty-seventh had completed its mission in dividing the enemy across the Escaut River and firmly established itself along the

Meuse-
Argonne
Offensive,
Second Phase

Divisions in
Belgium

Meuse-Argonne, Last Phase

east bank included in the division zone of action. By a clever flanking movement troops of the Ninety-first Division captured Spitaals Bosschen, a difficult wood extending across the central part of the division sector, reached the Escaut, and penetrated into the town of Audenarde. These divisions received high commendation from their corps commanders for their dash and energy.

On the 23d the Third and Fifth Corps pushed northward to the level of Bantheville. While we continued to press forward and throw back the enemy's violent counter-attacks with great loss to him, a regrouping of our forces was under way for the final assault. Evidences of loss of morale by the enemy gave our men more confidence in attack and more fortitude in enduring the fatigue of incessant effort and the hardships of very inclement weather.

With comparatively well-rested divisions, the final advance in the Meuse-Argonne front was begun on November 1. Our increased artillery force acquitted itself magnificently in support of the advance, and the enemy broke before the determined infantry, which, by its persistent fighting of the past weeks and the dash of this attack, had overcome his will to resist. The Third Corps took Aincreville, Doullon, and Andevanne, and the Fifth Corps took Landres et St. Georges and pressed through successive lines of resistance to Bayonville and Chénery. On the 2d the First Corps joined in the movement, which now became an impetuous onslaught that could not be stayed.

On the 3d advance troops surged forward in pursuit, some by motor trucks, while the artillery pressed along the country roads close behind. The First Corps reached Authe and Chatillon-Sur-Bar, the Fifth Corps, Fosse and Nouart, and the Third Corps Halles, penetrating the enemy's line to a depth of 12 miles. Our large caliber guns had advanced and were skillfully brought into position to fire upon the important lines at Montmedy, Longuyon, and Conflans. Our Third Corps crossed the Meuse on the 5th and the other corps, in the full confidence that the day was theirs, eagerly cleared the way of machine guns as they swept northward, maintaining complete co-ordination throughout. On the 6th, a division of the First Corps reached a point on the Meuse opposite Sedan, 25 miles from our line of departure. The strategical goal which was our highest hope was gained. We had cut the enemy's main line of communications and nothing but surrender or an armistice could save his army from complete disaster.

In all 40 enemy divisions had been used against us in the Meuse-Argonne battle. Between September 26 and November 6 we took 26,059 prisoners and 468 guns on this front. Our divisions engaged were the First, Second, Third, Fourth, Fifth, Twenty-sixth, Twenty-eighth, Twenty-ninth, Thirty-second, Thirty-third, Thirty-fifth, Thirty-seventh, Forty-second, Seventy-seventh, Seventy-eighth, Seventy-ninth, Eightieth, Eighty-second, Eighty-ninth, Ninetieth, and Ninety-first. Many of our divisions remained in line for a length of time that required nerves of steel, while others were sent in again after only a few days of rest. The First, Fifth, Twenty-sixth, Forty-second, Seventy-seventh, Eightieth, Eighty-ninth, and Ninetieth were in the line twice. Although some of the divisions were fighting their first battle, they soon became equal to the best.

Operations East of the Meuse

On the three days preceding November 10, the Third, the Second Colonial, and the Seventeenth French Corps fought a difficult struggle through the Meuse Hills south of Stenay and forced the enemy into the plain. Meanwhile, my plans for further use of the American forces contemplated an advance between the Meuse and the Moselle in the

direction of Longwy by the First Army, while, at the same time, the Second Army should assure the offensive toward the rich iron fields of Briey. These operations were to be followed by an offensive toward Chateau-Salins east of the Moselle, thus isolating Metz. Accordingly, attacks on the American front had been ordered and that of the Second Army was in progress on the morning of November 11, when instructions were received that hostilities should cease at 11 o'clock A. M.

At this moment the line of the American sector, from right to left, began at Port-Sur-Seille, thence across the Moselle to Vandieres and through the Woevre to Bezonvaux, in the foothills of the Meuse, thence along to the foothills and through the northern edge of the Woevre forests to the Meuse at Mouzay, thence along the Meuse connecting with the French under Sedan.

Co-operation among the Allies has at all times been most cordial. A far greater effort has been put forth by the Allied armies and staffs to assist us than could have been expected. The French Government and Army have always stood ready to furnish us with supplies, equipment, and transportation, and to aid us in every way. In the towns and hamlets wherever our troops have been stationed or billeted the French people have everywhere received them more as relatives and intimate friends than as soldiers of a foreign army. For these things words are quite inadequate to express our gratitude. There can be no doubt that the relations growing out of our associations here assure a permanent friendship between the two peoples. Although we have not been so intimately associated with the people of Great Britain, yet their troops and ours when thrown together have always warmly fraternized. The reception of those of our forces who have passed through England and of those who have been stationed there has always been enthusiastic. Altogether it has been deeply impressed upon us that the ties of language and blood bring the British and ourselves together completely and inseparably.

There are in Europe altogether, including a regiment and some sanitary units with the Italian Army and the organizations at Murmansk, also including those en route from the States, approximately 2,053,347 men, less our losses. Of this total, there are in France 1,338,169 combatant troops. Forty divisions have arrived, of which the infantry personnel of ten have been used as replacements, leaving 30 divisions now in France organized into three armies of three corps each.

The losses of the Americans up to November 18 are: Killed and wounded, 36,145; died of disease, 14,811; deaths unclassified, 2,204; wounded, 179,625; prisoners, 2,163; missing, 1,160. We have captured about 44,000 prisoners and 1,400 guns, howitzers and trench mortars.

The duties of the General Staff, as well as those of the army and corps staffs, have been very ably performed. Especially is this true when we consider the new and difficult problems with which they have been confronted. This body of officers, both as individuals and as an organization, have, I believe, no superiors in professional ability, in efficiency, or in loyalty.

Nothing that we have in France better reflects the efficiency and devotion to duty of Americans in general than the Service of Supply, whose personnel is thoroughly imbued with a patriotic desire to do its full duty. They have at all times fully appreciated their responsibility to the rest of the army and the results produced have been most gratifying.

Operations
East of the
Meuse

Relations
With the
Allies

Strength

Commenda-
tion

Commen-
dation

Our Medical Corps is especially entitled to praise for the general effectiveness of its work both in hospital and at the front. Embracing men of high professional attainments, and splendid women devoted to their calling and untiring in their efforts, this department has made a new record for medical and sanitary proficiency.

The Quartermaster Department has had difficult and various tasks, but it has more than met all demands that have been made upon it. Its management and its personnel have been exceptionally efficient and deserve every possible commendation.

As to the more technical services, the able personnel of the Ordnance Department in France has splendidly fulfilled its functions, both in procurement and in forwarding the immense quantities of ordnance required. The officers and men and the young women of the Signal Corps have performed their duties with a large conception of the problem and with a devoted and patriotic spirit to which the perfection of our communications daily testify. While the Engineer Corps has been referred to in another part of this report, it should be further stated that the work has required large vision and high professional skill, and great credit is due their personnel for the high proficiency that they have constantly maintained.

Our aviators have no equals in daring or in fighting ability and have left a record of courageous deeds that will ever remain a brilliant page in the annals of our army. While the Tank Corps has had limited opportunities its personnel has responded gallantly on every possible occasion and has shown courage of the highest order.

The Adjutant General's Department has been directed with a systematic thoroughness and excellence that surpassed any previous work of its kind. The Inspector General's Department has risen to the highest standards and throughout has ably assisted commanders in the enforcement of discipline. The able personnel of the Judge Advocate General's Department has solved with judgment and wisdom the multitude of difficult legal problems, many of them involving questions of great international importance.

It would be impossible in this brief preliminary report to do justice to the personnel of all the different branches of this organization which I shall cover in detail in a later report.

The Navy in European waters has at all times most cordially aided the Army, and it is most gratifying to report that there has never before been such perfect co-operation between these two branches of the service.

As to Americans in Europe not in the military services, it is the greatest pleasure to say that, both in official and in private life, they are intensely patriotic and loyal, and have been invariably sympathetic and helpful to the Army.

Finally, I pay the supreme tribute to our officers and soldiers of the line. When I think of their heroism, their patience under hardships, their unflinching spirit of offensive action, I am filled with emotion which I am unable to express. Their deeds are immortal, and they have earned the eternal gratitude of our country.

I am, Mr. Secretary, very respectfully,

JOHN J. PERSHING,
General, Commander in Chief,
American Expeditionary Forces.

To the Secretary of War.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 020 932 286 9

PUBLISHED BY
MEYER & THALHEIMER
BALTIMORE, MD.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 020 932 286 9